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**THREE CHICAGO POLICE OFFICERS ADMIT ROLES IN THEFT OF
COCAINE, FALSE CHARGES AND COVER-UP; FIVE NOW CONVICTED IN PLOT**

CHICAGO -- Three Chicago Police Department officers – a detective and two tactical patrol officers at the time of the offenses – pleaded guilty today to federal charges involving the theft of cocaine from an automobile in a police impound lot and causing an individual to be wrongfully charged with possessing a portion of that cocaine. The two tactical officers, **Edgar I. Placencio**, who later became a Detective assigned to Area 5, and **Ruben Oliveras**, pleaded guilty at their arraignment after charges were filed against them this morning, bringing to five the total number of officers who have been charged and pleaded guilty in this matter since charges were first brought just a month ago. Placencio and Oliveras were charged with and admitted they knew that police reports were falsified and that an individual had been wrongfully charged, but they helped cover-up their colleagues' crimes by lying or failing to disclose information to federal agents – making them the first local police officers to be prosecuted in this district for such conduct.

Ex-Detective **Jon F. Woodall**, also pleaded guilty today and is facing an agreed sentence of nine years in prison, making him the last of three officers who were charged last month to admit his role in the narcotics and civil rights offenses. Altogether, the five officers admitted that they either participated in or knew about each other's activities in 1998 and 1999 when they combined to steal and cover-up the theft of nearly seven kilograms of cocaine and a firearm hidden in an

automobile in a police impound lot. Several of the officers divided and later sold five of the kilograms and the firearm, and caused an individual to be wrongfully charged with possessing the remaining two kilos.

Placencio and Oliveras were charged in a superseding information filed this morning, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, together with Thomas J. Kneir, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Terry Hillard, Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department. The continuing investigation, which is being conducted jointly by the FBI and the Police Department's Internal Affairs Division, stems from the investigation of former Chicago Police Officer Joseph Miedzianowski, who was sentenced on Jan. 24 to life in prison for running a cocaine distribution conspiracy involving some two dozen co-defendants, including his ex-partner John Galligan.

Placencio, 33, a Chicago Police Officer since 1992, who was previously assigned to a tactical unit in the 25th Police District (Grand-Central), pleaded guilty to one count of misprison of a civil rights felony. Oliveras, 42, a Chicago Police Officer since 1986, who was also assigned to a 25th District tactical unit, pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor count of violating an individual's civil rights. Both officers must resign from the police department within three days under the terms of their guilty pleas.

"Placencio and Oliveras were sworn to uphold the law, and, instead, they violated both their oath and the law when they concealed the criminal acts of their fellow officers. We will prosecute such conduct just as vigorously as the blatant criminal acts themselves," Mr. Fitzgerald said. "There are two types of police officers: honest and dishonest. The criminal justice system cannot look the other way at police officers who look the other way at corruption. Police officers who know of

others' corruption and seek to cover it up should understand that they will face prosecution as well," he added.

Woodall, 40, a Chicago Police Officer since 1990 and an Area 5 Detective since 1995, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess and distribute cocaine. Woodall and two other 25th District tactical officers were indicted on Jan. 27 on the drug conspiracy charges. Those other officers, Peter L. Matich, 40, who joined the department in 1994, and James B. Benson, 34, an officer since 1991, each pleaded guilty to the drug conspiracy on Feb. 13 and Jan. 27, respectively. Woodall, Matich and Benson have all since resigned from the police department while awaiting sentencing.

According to today's plea agreements, on March 4, 1998, Woodall, Matich, Benson, Placencio, Oliveras and "Officer 3" set up a multi-vehicle moving surveillance, planning to arrest "Person A," whom they believed was transporting at least a kilogram of cocaine. Eventually the six officers in their police vehicles stopped a Camaro in which Person A and "Person B" were riding near the intersection of Foster and Cicero avenues. Person A told Woodall, Benson, Matich and Placencio that there was a vehicle in a police impound lot which contained drugs in a hidden compartment. Woodall, Matich, Benson and Placencio eventually went to the police impound lot at 650 West 83rd St., where Placencio kept Person A in custody in a police vehicle outside of the lot. Woodall, Matich and Benson used their position and authority as police officers to gain entry to the impound lot and locate a white two-door Buick, which they searched, and from which Woodall removed 6 kilograms of cocaine, a partial kilogram of cocaine (approximately 4 ounces) and a 9 millimeter semi-automatic pistol from a hidden-compartment.

After returning to the parking lot of the 25th District police station, Woodall, Matich and Benson agreed that two kilograms of cocaine they had taken would be inventoried with the

police department, that the police reports would falsely represent that these two kilograms were recovered from the Camaro being driven by Person B, and that Person B would be charged with possession of these two kilograms of cocaine, as well as with possession of the three other kilograms of suspected cocaine recovered earlier from the Camaro. Woodall told Benson and Matich that he was taking one of the remaining kilograms of cocaine to give to a drug dealer, Fred Rock, who pleaded guilty and cooperated in the Miedzianowski case, and Woodall, Benson and Matich then agreed that they would keep for themselves the remaining cocaine from the impound lot. Woodall kept possession of the remaining four kilograms of cocaine and the partial kilogram, as well as the 9 millimeter semi-automatic pistol.

According to Woodall's plea agreement, "The police officers involved in Person B's arrest either expressly agreed or did not object to having the police reports falsely state that five kilograms of cocaine had been taken from the Camaro at the time of Person B's arrest, as well as falsely state other facts concerning Person B's arrest." As a result, the police reports of Person B's arrest contained numerous false statements, including that the arrest took place in a Jewel parking lot eight blocks from the location of the actual arrest; that Person A was in an Oldsmobile and Person B was in the Camaro shortly before their arrest; that Persons A and B were observed in the Jewel parking lot outside of the Camaro; and that Person B was observed removing packages which appeared to be kilograms of cocaine from the trunk of the Camaro. These police reports disclosed neither the visit to the police impound lot, nor the search of the Buick in the lot.

After Person B's arrest, Woodall learned that a number of police officers assigned to the 25th District were discussing a search of a car in a police impound lot. Supervisors asked Woodall about a trip to the lot, and, on a number of occasions, Woodall, Matich, Benson and Oliveras met,

discussed what they should say if asked about the arrest of Person B, and agreed that they would falsely say that the arrest occurred as described in the false police reports.

According to Placencio's plea agreement, on July 20, 1999, he was interviewed by FBI agents who were investigating the arrest and charging of Person B. During the interview, Placencio made material omissions to the agents to conceal the felony violation of the civil rights of Person B by Chicago police officers. When asked about the arrest of Person B and shown the false police reports, Placencio did not make known to the FBI agents the criminal conduct of Chicago police officers that resulted in Person B being charged based upon false evidence.

According to Oliveras' plea agreement, on July 27, 1999, and Dec. 13, 2002, he was interviewed by FBI agents regarding the arrest and charging of Person B. Oliveras falsely told the FBI agents that five kilograms of cocaine had been recovered at the time Person B was arrested.

If Woodall's plea is accepted by the Court, he is facing an agreed sentence of 108 months, or nine years, in prison. Placencio faces a maximum penalty of three years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, while Oliveras is facing a maximum penalty of a year in prison and a \$100,000 fine. In each case, the Court will determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the United States Sentencing Guidelines. Judge Darrah set sentencing for May 28.

The government is being represented by Assistant United States Attorneys Brian P. Netols and John R. Lausch.

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